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ABSTRACT

This report presents findings on a series of surveys conducted from 1998 through 2002. The findings: (1) Parents, teachers, and students believe that setting standards and enforcing them promotes learning; (2) standards and promotion policies have changed in recent years, and attitudes about local schools have improved; (3) the majority of parents and teachers say standardized tests are useful, and few students are overly anxious about them; (4) teachers support higher academic standards but have qualms about some aspects of testing; (5) teachers are troubled by poor student behavior and feel their views are ignored by decision-makers; (6) Americans say all students need the basics, and parents want their own children prepared for college; (7) there is a dramatic gap between the way employers and college professors rate high school graduates; (8) the majority of employers and professors have doubts about high school graduates' basic skills; (9) teachers say lack of parent involvement is a serious problem; (10) teachers, parents, and students are concerned about the uncivil atmosphere in many high schools; (11) superintendents and principals say their biggest problems are politics and bureaucracy; and (12) holding schools and educators directly responsible for student achievement is still uncommon. (WFA)

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Where We Are Now: 12 Things You Need to Know About Public Opinion and Public Schools.

Jean Johnson
Ann Duffett

2003

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Where We Are Now

12 Things You Need to Know about
PUBLIC OPINION and **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

PUBLIC AGENDA

Prepared by
Public Agenda

Washington Mutual

Underwritten by
Washington Mutual

A Digest of a Decade of Survey Research

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A Digest of a Decade of Survey Research

Where We Are Now

12 Things You Need to Know about
PUBLIC OPINION and **PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

A Report from Public Agenda

by Jean Johnson and Ann Duffett

with Jackie Vine and Leslie Moye

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For full question wording, full responses and original source for each finding cited in this report, please refer to the *Complete Survey Findings for Where We Are Now*, available free of charge in PDF format on www.publicagenda.org. Copies of Public Agenda's education reports from 1998 to the present also can be downloaded from the Web site free of charge.

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Bringing a Decade of Research to Light

Washington Mutual and Public Agenda – the nation's premier source of in-depth polling and research on education, children, family and other vital public issues—are pleased to bring you this new report *Where We Are Now: 12 Things You Need to Know about Public Opinion and Public Schools.*

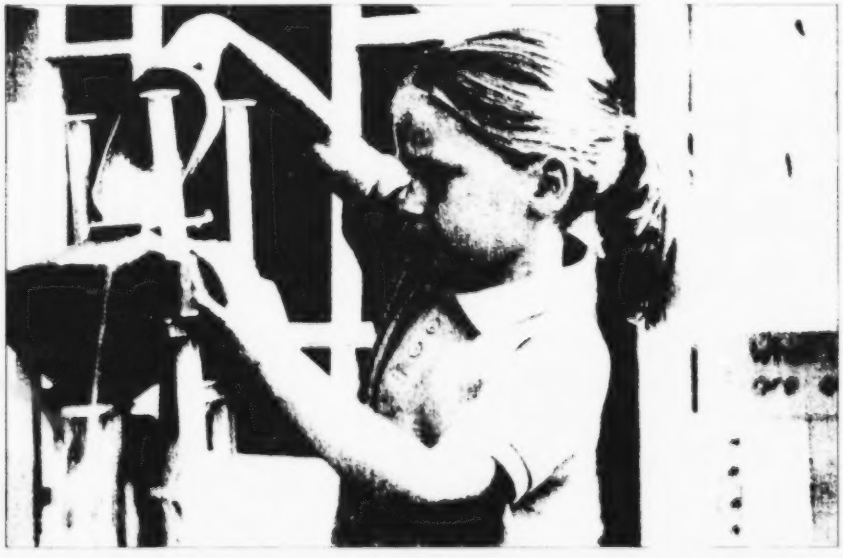
Where We Are Now—drawn from a decade of research and evaluation—will be an invaluable resource for public officials, school administrators and business and community leaders. It clearly lays out the opinions of various education stakeholders about issues ranging from student testing and achievement to teacher compensation and parental involvement. It also reveals challenges schools face in their work to equip students with the skills and knowledge they need for success in the workplace and in life.

At Washington Mutual, we continually invest in education because it produces a strong return for students and families. Healthy schools are the cornerstone of healthy communities.

Both Washington Mutual and Public Agenda are committed to listening to those who do the hard work of education every day and making sure that their voices continue to be an important part of the ongoing dialogue.

Kerry Killinger

Kerry Killinger
Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer
Washington Mutual



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Introduction

What Role Should Public Opinion Play?

In essence, *Where We Are Now* is a survey of surveys. It is an analysis of public opinion on public schools drawing on a decade of Public Agenda research and a close reading of polls conducted by other respected organizations. Here, we try to pinpoint the key elements of public thinking about public schools and show how it has changed over the last few years. Washington Mutual has provided support for this new analysis and for publication of this report.

This retrospective devotes special attention to attitudes on standards and testing. Schools nationwide have adopted new standards for student learning, and all 50 states now use testing to some degree to measure student progress. In 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act, which relies heavily on annual testing and sets out explicit consequences for schools where students repeatedly fail.

The standards movement has enjoyed bipartisan backing for more than a decade, and many strongly support the new federal law. From their perspective, what has long been talked about—setting higher standards and enforcing them—is now becoming reality. But others voice doubts. Is all this testing really beneficial, they ask? Will we fulfill our obligation to help schools and students who fail?

Where We Are Now revisits the public's take on standards and testing, along with other issues affecting public schools. But our report is not limited to assessing the broad public's views. In more than a dozen national surveys, Public Agenda has looked at attitudes among parents, teachers, students, principals, superintendents and school board members, and we add their thinking to the mix.

We rely particularly on a series of surveys conducted from 1998 through 2002 with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts and GE Foundation. These *Reality Check* surveys, originally published in *Education Week*, capture the views of students, teachers, parents, employers and college professors just as the standards movement was shifting into high gear. See the Methodology for a list of all the studies covered in *Where We Are Now*.

The attention we give to public opinion in this report naturally prompts the question of what role polls should play in education or any other complex policy arena. Viewing public opinion as a formula for policy change is probably a recipe for disaster. People are not following some important debates in education very closely. They may have a vision of the kind of public schools they want, but few have struggled with the details of precisely how to get there. Parents are understandably more focused on the needs of their own child than on those of children overall.

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Context also plays a role. Surveys are useful predictors of how the public may respond, and *Where We Are Now* focuses on findings that capture the fundamental elements of public thinking. But the quality of local schools, the quality of local leadership, local politics, local funding, local press coverage—all of these can affect people's views. Surveys can give leaders a heads up, but they still have to consider the situation on the ground.

It is also worth remembering that some of the most significant developments in American history have not been led by public opinion. Americans now say that the civil rights movement benefited the country, but that was not always the case. Still, the public pays for public schools, and most American families send their children to them. It is almost inconceivable to imagine a defensible public school system that does not reflect the values and goals of the community.

So what role should surveys play? They offer a road map of where people agree and where they are divided. They provide clues to what people value and what they understand. They can be an early warning system about policies that may unnerve or alienate people. But in the end, they are a starting point for dialogue, not a substitute for it. They are a guide for leadership, not a replacement for it.

FINDING ONE:

The public—including parents, teachers and students—believes that setting standards and enforcing them promotes learning. Social promotion,. they say, harms kids.

The specific provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act may be controversial among educators, but the public's support for the ideas behind the drive to raise standards is not in doubt. More than a decade ago, the majority of Americans bemoaned the lack of even basic skills among students, and many still complain about low academic standards. Even now, the vast majority of Americans are convinced that most youngsters achieve just a small part of their educational potential. And surveys of students suggest that many of them are far from exerting maximum effort in school.

Surveys that ask Americans about raising and enforcing standards in public schools routinely draw strong majority support. Backing for higher standards extends across different groups in the population, and African American parents seem especially concerned about low standards in their children's schools. What's more, support for higher standards remains strong even when researchers ask respondents about trade-offs such as holding children back or forcing them to attend summer school. In fact, majorities of parents, teachers, students, employers and professors say it is much worse for a child to be promoted and passed along without learning what was expected than to be held back a grade.

Most communities have now had a taste of what the standards movement may mean in action. And so far, parents, teachers, employers and professors give their local districts a remarkable thumbs up. Strong majorities say their own district has been careful and reasonable in its drive to raise standards. Mere handfuls believe it would be better for their district to return to the policies of the past.

NOTE: Question wording in charts has been edited for space. Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding or the omission of some answer categories. Please refer to the *Complete Survey Findings for Where We Are Now* on Public Agenda Online (www.publicagenda.org) for complete question wording, full responses and sample size for each finding cited in this report. Unless otherwise noted, "students" are public school students in 6th-12th grade; "teachers" are K-12 public school teachers; "parents" refers to those who have a child in grades K-12 in public school; "employers" refers to those who make hiring decisions for employees recently out of high school or college; and "professors" refers to those who taught freshmen or sophomores in the past two years.

Where We Started

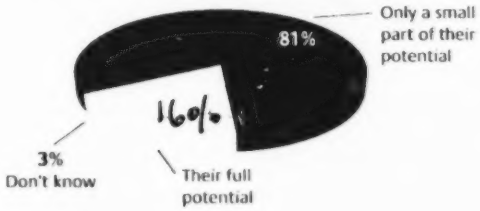
During the 1990s Americans said:

Lack of adequate standards is a problem*	72%
The country's schools are doing a fair or poor job in teaching students to read, write and reason well**	64%
Not enough emphasis on basics is a serious problem	60%

* NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School of Government 1999
**School Reform Survey/Louis Harris & Associates 1991

Kids Can Do More

Americans say most students achieve:*



% of students who say:

Most students do the bare minimum they need to get by	71%
I could try a little harder in school	56%

* Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2001

Strong Support for Raising Standards

Having guidelines for what students should learn and know helps improve students' academic performance

Students should pass a standardized test to be promoted and those who fail should go to summer school or repeat the grade

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The Rubber Hits the Road

Parents would still approve a policy that requires students to pass a standardized test to be promoted even if it meant:

Their own child had to go to summer school	94%
Their own child had to repeat the grade	87%

Students say they would be motivated a lot to work harder in school by:

Fear of being left back	67%
Fear of having to go to summer school	63%

Higher Standards for All Children

Inner-city kids should be expected to achieve the same standards as kids from wealthy backgrounds

It is absolutely essential to promote kids *only* after they show they have learned what they were supposed to

African American parents believe the bigger priority for their children's schools should be to:

Even If...

Would you favor stricter standards for social promotion even if it meant significantly more students would be held back?

% of Americans who say:

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 1999

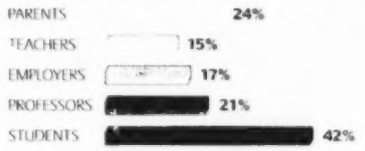
It's Worse to Pass Children Along

Which is worse for a child struggling in school:

To be promoted to the next grade and be expected to keep up with the work

OR

To repeat a grade in order to catch up



Few Want to Turn Back

Should the standards initiative:

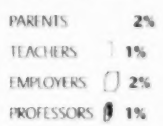
Proceed as planned

OR

Continue but with some adjustments

OR

Be stopped and things should go back to the way they were



So Far, Schools Have Been Reasonable

Schools are being careful and reasonable in putting higher standards in place

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FINDING TWO:

Standards and promotion policies have changed in recent years, and attitudes about local schools have improved. Even so, many students still move ahead without acquiring needed skills.

Surveys suggest that standards reform is far more than rhetoric. For example, based on what Public Agenda has learned from teachers about practices in their own schools, social promotion is on the decline. Also, there's evidence that more schools are using summer school as part of a standards reform package.

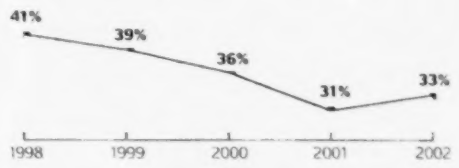
Despite concern that communities resist efforts to raise and enforce standards, the *Reality Check* surveys suggest that attitudes about local public schools have actually improved from 1998 to 2002—at least in the academic arena. Both professors and employers are less likely to say that local schools ask too little of students. And while both of these groups still have strong complaints about students' skills (see Finding 8), they are somewhat more likely than they were five years ago to say that local schools do a good or excellent job. Parents also seem to be seeing some improvement in standards in local public schools compared to standards in local private ones.

Even so, standards advocates probably shouldn't pat themselves on the back quite yet. Nearly half of teachers say many youngsters in their school get a diploma even though they don't have the needed skills. A large number of teachers says some of their colleagues pass students to the next level even though they aren't ready. Indeed, a fairly large number of teachers report having done this themselves.

Social Promotion Is Declining

% of teachers who say:

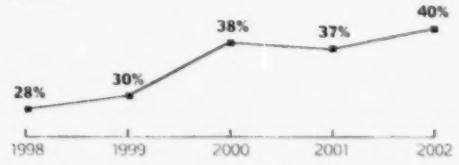
Schools automatically promote students who have reached a maximum age



Summer School Attendance Is Up

% of teachers who say:

The number of students going to summer school has increased



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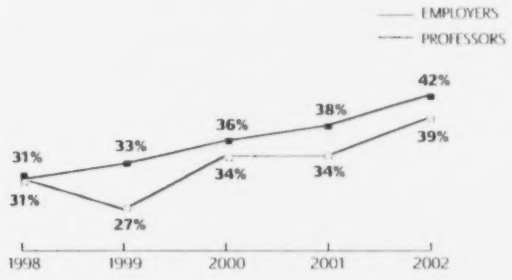
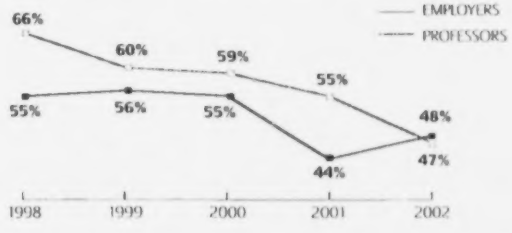
Better Marks from Employers and Professors

Local public schools are doing an excellent or good job

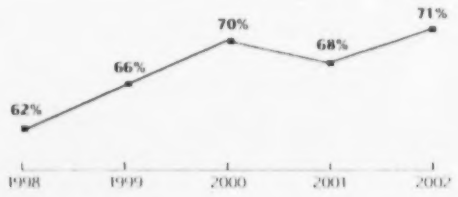


Local schools expect too little from students



And Better Grades from Parents

Their child's public school gets a grade of A or B



Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll

Better Comparisons with Private Schools

According to parents:

Local public schools have higher academic standards than local private schools

Local public schools provide a better education than local private schools

Still a Way to Go

According to teachers:

Some kids graduate even though they haven't learned what they are supposed to	48%
Teachers pass students to the next grade as long as they try hard and attend class regularly	46%
In the past few years, I have promoted students who should have been held back	44%

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FINDING THREE:

The vast majority of parents and teachers say standardized tests are useful, and few students are overly anxious about them. But people also think tests can be misused, and many say there's too much emphasis on them.

Time and again, surveys show Americans calling for tests in public schools, and people see a number of advantages to them. Strong majorities of parents, teachers, employers and professors say students work harder if they know they will be tested, and students themselves acknowledge this is so. Majorities also say standardized tests are a good way to spot struggling students who might need help.

Most parents say their child takes about the right number of tests, and students themselves say test questions are fair. While there has been controversy over cultural or racial bias in standardized tests, many African American parents say they believe tests reveal genuine differences in achievement.

Students seem to take standardized tests in stride. Virtually all say they take these tests seriously, but only a handful report feeling overwhelmed by pressure. Most say that teachers spend time in class preparing for standardized tests, but only small numbers say teachers neglect other important topics to do this.

Findings such as these are strong endorsements for testing, yet there are limits on what people find acceptable. Large majorities of parents, teachers, students, employers and professors say it is not fair to use results from a single test to determine promotion or graduation. Still, there is little evidence to suggest that such practice is common. Just a handful of teachers say their district uses test scores this way.

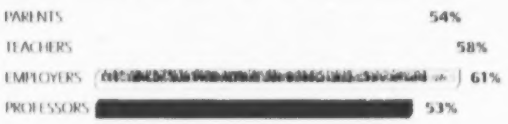
Nevertheless, there are some warning signs for testing advocates. Parents, teachers, employers and professors say testing has benefits, but majorities also say that it gets "far too much emphasis" today. Students, of course, take many tests, not just the ones required for standards assessment. Tests are frequently part of applying for college, competing for financial aid, monitoring learning disabilities—on top of the time-honored midterm and final exams. And testing and test scores are often a focal point for local news coverage and community debate.

It is not clear what part of this mix feeds concerns about too much emphasis or whether they are the net result of accumulated factors. Whatever the case, they do bear watching. Most Americans believe tests are genuinely useful, and they rely on them to insure that schools do their job. In fact, a sharp turn away from testing might create its own kind of backlash. Still, when it comes to testing, many Americans could come to believe that more is not necessarily better.

Testing as Insurance

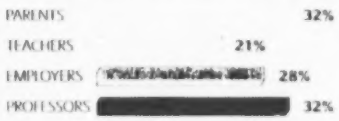
Before students are awarded a high school diploma:

They should be required to pass a basic skills test



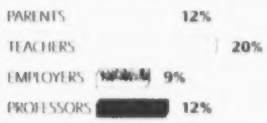
OR

They should pass a more challenging test



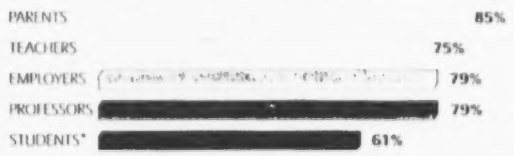
OR

It's a bad idea to require a test for a high school diploma

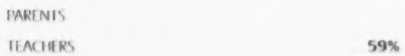


Other Benefits as Well

Students work harder if they have to pass a test for promotion



Testing at a young age is a good way to identify students who need help



Standardized test scores are a good way to spot students who need tutoring or summer school

*High school students

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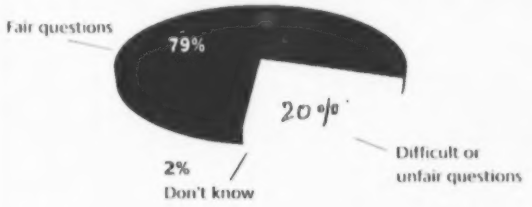
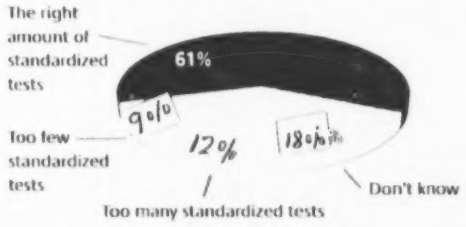
Tests Are Generally Fair

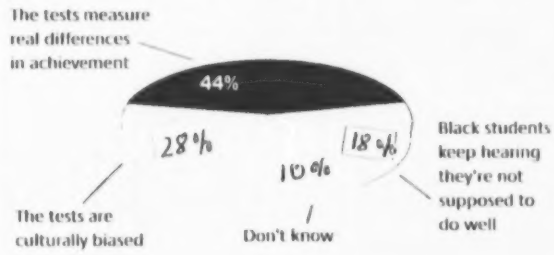
According to students, the standardized tests they take ask:



According to parents, their child is taking:

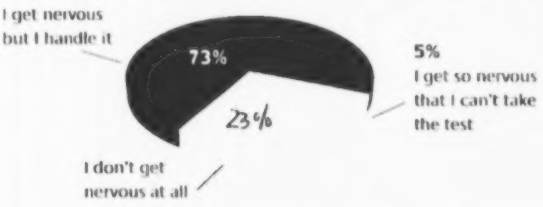


According to African American parents, black students don't do as well as white students on standardized tests because:



Most Students Don't Panic

How nervous do you get when you take standardized tests?



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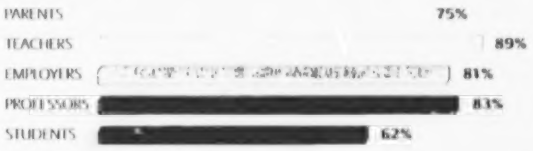
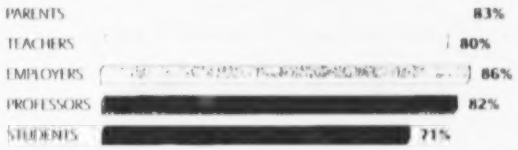
Don't Judge by Tests Alone

It's wrong to use results of just one test as basis for promotion

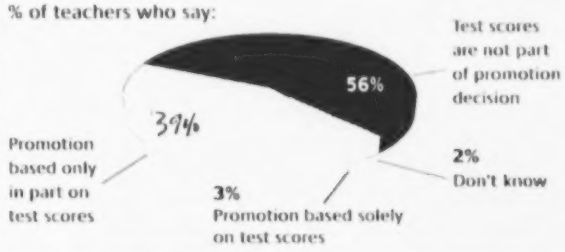


Schools should use standardized test scores *and* teacher evaluations as basis for promotion



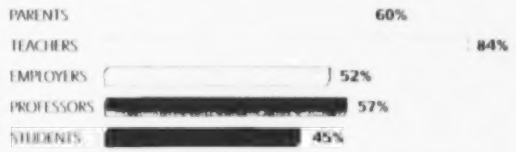
What part do test scores play when it comes to promotion in your school?

% of teachers who say:



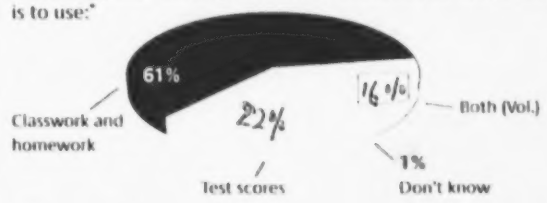
Too Much Emphasis on Testing?

Schools place far too much emphasis on standardized test scores



Teachers will end up teaching to the test

Parents say the best way to measure academic achievement is to use:*



* Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2002

FINDING FOUR:

While teachers support higher academic standards, they have qualms about some aspects of testing.

The vast majority of teachers believe their own district has been "careful and reasonable" in raising standards, and they voice strong support for the principles behind the movement. Like other groups, they endorse having guidelines for what students should learn, and they reject social promotion. Standardized tests, they say, can motivate students and identify those who need help.

There is virtually no support among teachers for returning to the pre-standards policies of the past. Even so, a large number of teachers says some adjustments are needed. And while only modest majorities of parents, employers and professors worry about too much emphasis on testing, the vast majority of teachers sees a problem here.

So far at least, comparatively few teachers say that they themselves spend so much time preparing students for tests that real learning is neglected. But a strong majority says that standardized testing inevitably leads to "teaching to the test," something other groups say as well. In focus groups, teachers sometimes complain that standardized tests bear little relationship to what youngsters should be learning and that the emphasis on them suctions some of the joy and creativity out of their lessons.

Teachers also seem deeply uncomfortable with the prospect that they (and their schools) might be judged explicitly on how well students perform on standardized tests. A majority rejects the idea of tying their salaries to their students' test scores. From teachers' point of view, poorly motivated, poorly prepared students may not succeed no matter how hard the teacher tries. Teachers also are discouraged by learning problems that plague schools in troubled, disadvantaged areas. Asked whether a group of talented, dedicated teachers could "turn things around" at a troubled school, most teachers doubt that they could. Unfortunately, teachers seem to be saying, it takes more than hardworking teachers to truly leave no child behind.

Teachers are not the only group in education with doubts about testing. Most principals voice concerns about what tests really show and whether they are carefully used in the current atmosphere. And like teachers, many balk at the notion of being judged mainly by how well students do on standardized tests.

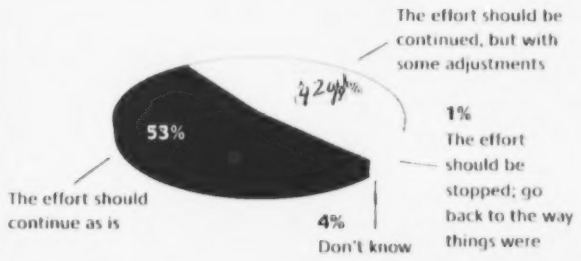
Teachers Support Raising Standards

According to teachers:

Students should pass a standardized test before being promoted	87%
Schools are being careful and reasonable in putting higher standards in place	83%
Having guidelines for what students should learn and know helps improve their performance	80%
Students work harder if they have to pass a test for promotion	75%
Standardized test scores are a good way to spot students who need tutoring or summer school	62%

Some Adjustments Are Needed

When it comes to the effort to raise standards, teachers say:


The effort should be continued, but with some adjustments
42%
1%
The effort should be stopped; go back to the way things were
53%
The effort should continue as is
4%
Don't know

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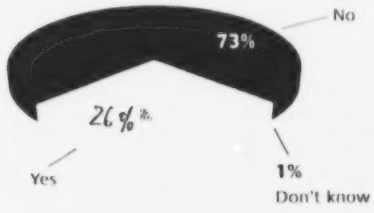
Teaching to the Test?

Teachers will end up teaching to the test instead of making sure real learning takes place

Thinking about your own classroom, do you focus so much on test preparation that real learning is neglected?

% of teachers who say:

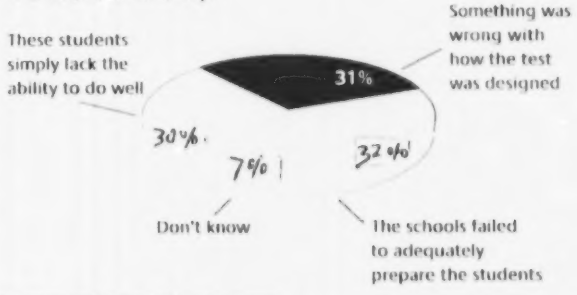


Can Teachers Guarantee that Youngsters Pass?

Teachers* believe that in schools with low student achievement and uninvolved parents, talented teachers:

If many students in your district did poorly on a standardized test, which would be your most likely reaction?

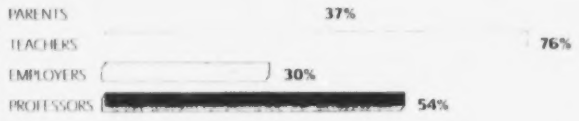
% of teachers who say:


These students simply lack the ability to do well
Something was wrong with how the test was designed
31%
30%
7%
32%
Don't know
The schools failed to adequately prepare the students

* Teachers with 5 years or less experience

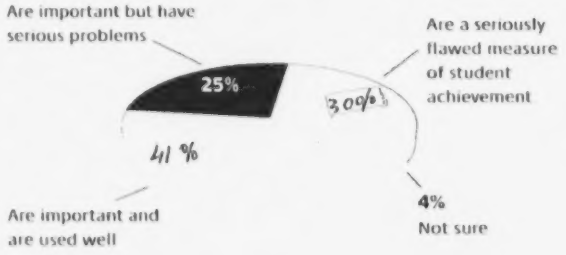
Should Teacher Pay Be Tied to Student Achievement?

It's a bad idea to tie financial incentives for teachers and principals to student achievement

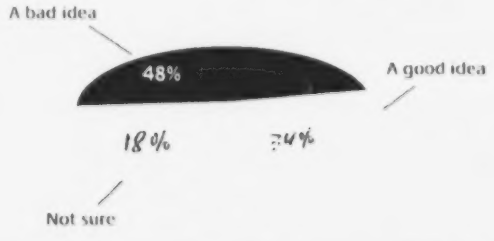


The Principal Difference

According to principals, standardized tests:



According to principals, holding principals accountable for student test scores is:



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FINDING FIVE:

Teachers are troubled by lack of parental support and poor student behavior. Teachers also say their views are generally ignored by decision makers.

Get a group of teachers together and ask them about the toughest part of their job. Chances are their first comments won't be about testing or low pay or even class size. Instead, they will most likely talk about the dispiriting problems of poor student behavior and lack of parental support.

Large majorities of teachers say that parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable are a serious problem in their school, as are parents who fail to set limits and provide structure at home. More than 4 in 10 say that teachers in their school spend more time trying to keep order than actually teaching, and surveys of students show them reporting pretty much the same thing. Surveys of parents also suggest that teachers are not that far off the mark in their complaints about kids not working hard in class. Just half of parents claim that they have been successful in teaching their own child to do his or her best in school.

The lack of cooperation and effort seems to take its toll. In a recent Public Agenda survey of high school teachers, only a small percentage says teacher morale is high in their school. And in a study of new public school teachers, the vast majority says that they would choose a job in a school with motivated kids and supportive parents over a job in another school with significantly higher pay.

Still, not all of teachers' complaints involve students and parents. Some pertain to their own role in education decision making. Polls suggest that the public has high regard for teachers' views about education, but teachers themselves say they are generally out of the loop when district leaders make their plans. Leaders sometimes approach them to rally support for a predetermined agenda, teachers say, but they seldom ask for their ideas or advice.

Communication seems less than optimal within the schools too. Teachers are divided on the degree to which their own administrators take the issues they care about into account. And they don't seem to have much of a chance to talk about school issues with colleagues either. Just 1 high school teacher out of 5 reports meeting regularly with colleagues to share ideas.

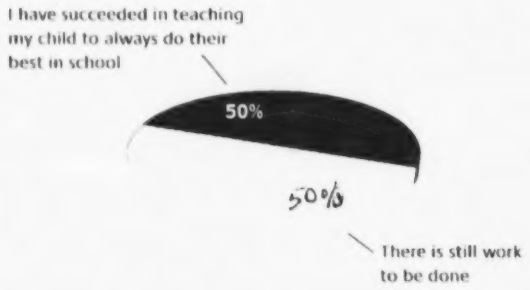
Can't Get No Satisfaction

According to teachers:

Parents who fail to set limits and create structure at home for their kids are a serious problem	83%
Parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable for their behavior or academic performance are a serious problem	81%
Teacher morale is high in my high school	15%

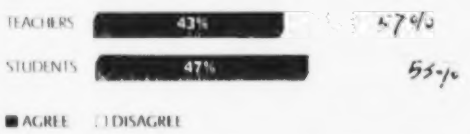
Parents: Half Succeed, Half Don't

% of parents who say:



Time on Task

Teachers spend more time trying to keep order in the classroom than teaching students



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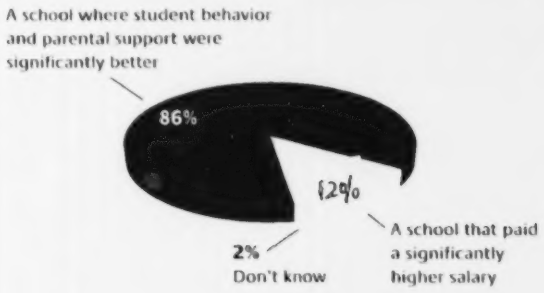
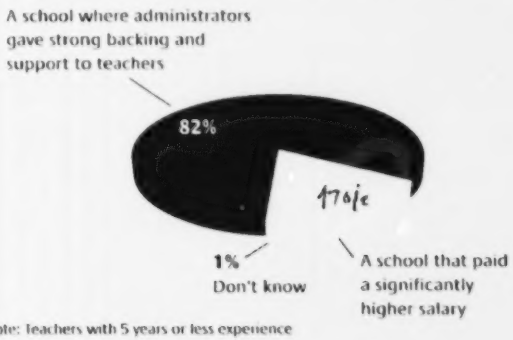
Money Can't Buy Me Love

Given the choice, teachers say they would prefer to work in:


A school where student behavior and parental support were significantly better
86%
12%
2%
Don't know
A school that paid a significantly higher salary

Given the choice, teachers say they would prefer to work in:

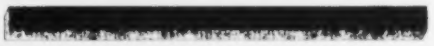

A school where administrators gave strong backing and support to teachers
82%
17%
1%
Don't know
A school that paid a significantly higher salary

Note: Teachers with 5 years or less experience

Are Schools Good Places to Work?

% of teachers who say:

My school puts obstacles in my way when I'm trying to accomplish goals at work



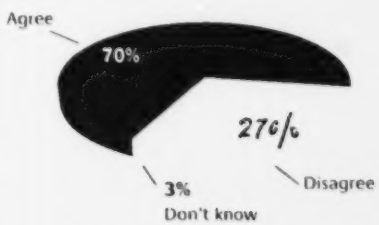
Administrators listen and take into account the issues teachers care about

Teachers in my high school regularly meet to share ideas about lesson plans and teaching methods

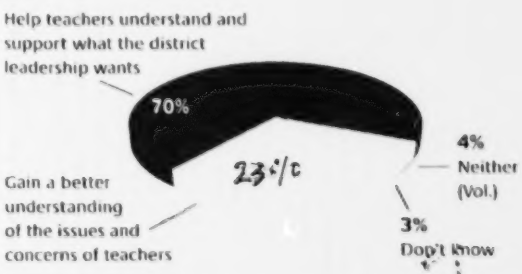
Does Anyone Really Care?

Rank-and-file teachers are often left out of the loop in their district's decision-making process

% of teachers who:



When district leaders talk with teachers about school policy, teachers say it's to:



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FINDING SIX:

Americans say all students need the basics, and parents want their own children prepared for college. For most, a college diploma is as indispensable as a high school diploma used to be.

A decade ago, focus groups with the public would often produce outbursts of complaints about lack of basic skills among young people. And reading, writing and basic math continue to comprise the cornerstone of what people want all youngsters to learn. Other subjects are certainly desirable, and parents certainly expect their children to be prepared for higher education. Yet, less than half of parents claim to be knowledgeable about the availability of rigorous courses at their child's school. Parents seem to focus less on the details about curriculum than on the extent to which their child is prepared for a job or college.

Majorities of parents, teachers, employers and professors say youngsters should pass a basic skills test to get a diploma, although fairly significant numbers say the test should cover even more. Americans seem divided on whether all students have the ability to achieve a *high* level of learning. Roughly half say they do, but substantial numbers doubt that this is so.

The public also gives mixed signals on whether all youngsters should go to college. Most Americans say a college education is as important now as a high school diploma used to be, and they certainly see the advantages it offers in the job market.

The vast majority of parents expect their own child to attend college, and Hispanic and African American parents are even more committed to this goal. Most high school students also say they expect to attend college, and for them, getting into one is a major reason to work hard in school.

Nevertheless, significant numbers of Americans also say there are too many youngsters in college who do not belong there, and professors say lack of motivation—not money or skills—is the major reason students drop out. Among parents, this discrepancy probably reflects the exceptionalism almost all parents naturally feel about their own child. It may also reflect shifting definitions of "college." For many people, going to college now signifies any of a number of post-high school options, not just the traditional baccalaureate degree. The public seems persuaded that youngsters need more than what is seemingly taught in high schools today. Whether they believe most high school graduates have the motivation and academic skills to complete a traditional college degree is another question.

Basics Now and Forever

It's absolutely essential for public schools to teach:

Limited Knowledge about School Curriculum

% of parents who say they:

Know a lot about curriculum for their child's grade	58%
Know a lot about availability of rigorous courses in their child's high school	45%
Are very comfortable helping plan curriculum	25%
Have helped plan curriculum in the past	15%

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How Far Can Most Kids Go?

Before students are awarded a high school diploma, would you want your district to require students to pass:

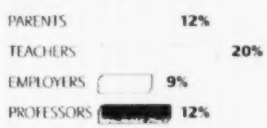
A basic skills test in reading, writing and math

OR

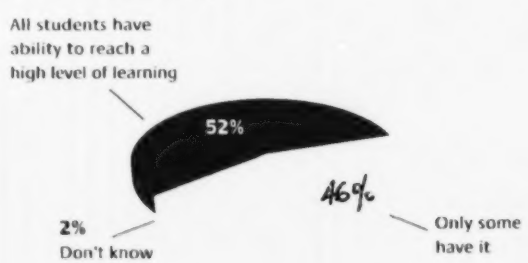
A more challenging test that shows they've learned at higher levels

OR

Is requiring kids to pass a test a bad idea?



% of Americans who say:*



* Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2001

College as Job 1

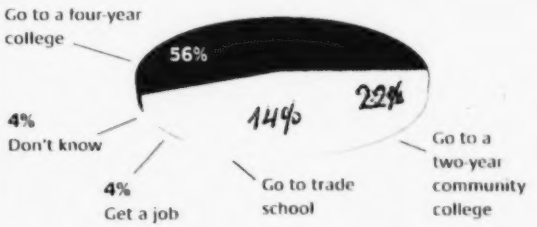
% of Americans who say:

A college education has become as important as a high school diploma used to be	87%
Students will have better job prospects if they go to college	86%
[Their] state needs more college-educated workers so it can attract high-tech jobs and businesses	60%

Great Expectations

% of high school parents who say:

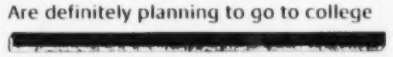
After graduation, they would like their child to:



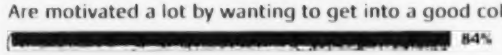
A college education is absolutely essential for my child

% of students who say they:

Are definitely planning to go to college



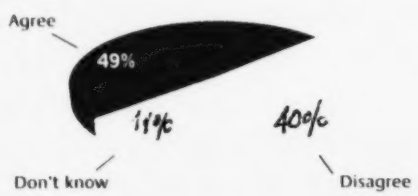
Are motivated a lot by wanting to get into a good college



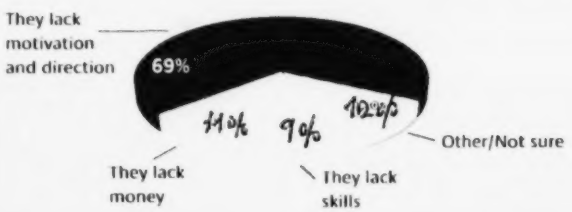
College for Everybody?

There are too many students in college who don't belong there

% of Americans who:



What is the main reason students drop out of college?
% of professors who say:



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FINDING SEVEN:

There is a dramatic gap between the way employers and college professors rate high school graduates and the way parents and teachers view them.

As we saw in Finding 2, employers' and professors' perceptions of the nation's public schools have improved in recent years. But both groups do see substantial room for improvement, and their views are far more negative than those of parents, teachers or students.

In the most recent *Reality Check* surveys, less than half of employers and professors characterize their local schools as either excellent or good. Significant majorities believe that most students would benefit from being pushed harder in school, and almost half say schools expect students to learn too little. On the other hand, a large majority of parents give schools positive ratings, and most parents believe that academic expectations are about right rather than too high or too low.

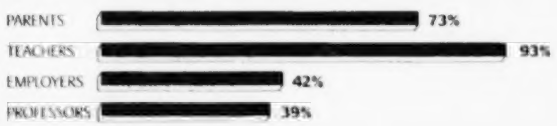
The value of a high school diploma—in terms of whether its recipient has mastered at least the basics—is questionable, according to most employers and professors. In stark contrast, most teachers, parents and high school students do believe a high school diploma implies mastery. Only a small number of professors puts a great deal of stock in the grades youngsters get on their school report cards, but majorities of teachers and parents think report cards are an accurate reflection of student learning.

Employers are far less likely than high school parents or teachers to say that public school graduates have what it takes to succeed in the world of work. And although most parents of high school students expect their own youngster to flourish in college, only about half of college professors or high school teachers report that students are adequately prepared for college level work.

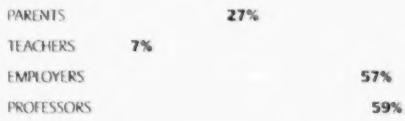
Employers and Professors Dissatisfied with Local Public Schools

Based on your experience, how would you rate the public schools?

% who say "excellent" or "good":

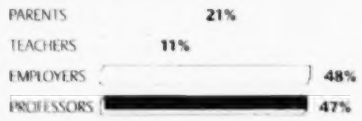


% who say "fair" or "poor":



Employers and Professors Want Schools to Ask for More

In terms of academics, public schools generally expect kids to learn too little



In terms of academics, most students would benefit if they were pushed harder in school

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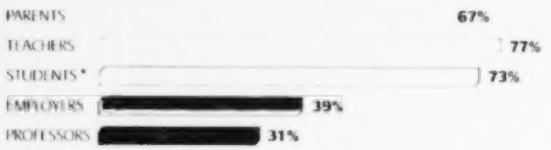
What Does a Diploma Guarantee?

A high school diploma means that the typical student has at least learned the basics

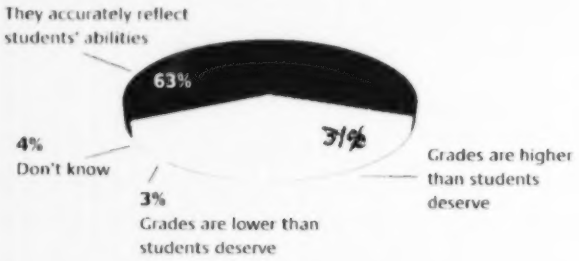


* High school students

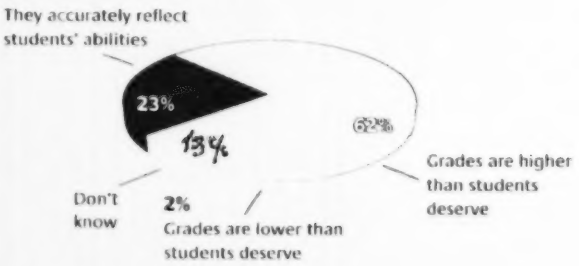
Are Grades Inflated?

How would you describe the grades students get on their report cards?

% of high school teachers who say:

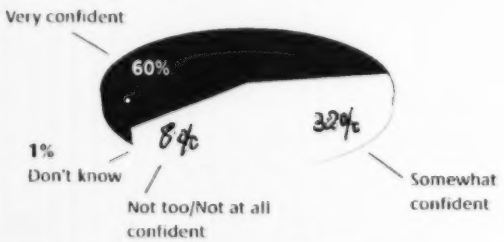


% of professors who say:



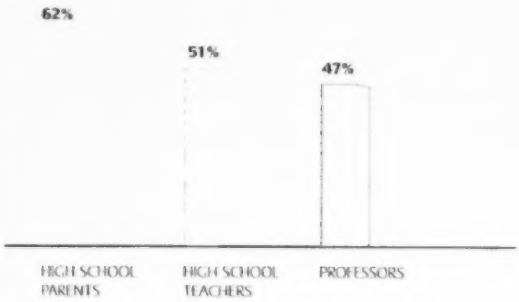
How confident are you that report cards accurately describe your child's progress and abilities?

% of parents who say:

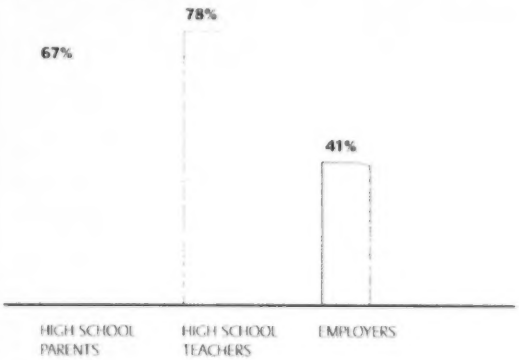


Are Students Prepared for the Future?

Public school graduates [will] have the skills to succeed in college



Public school graduates [will] have the skills to succeed in the work world



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FINDING EIGHT:

The vast majority of employers and professors continue to have serious doubts about public school graduates' basic skills—especially when it comes to writing.

For five consecutive years between 1998 and 2002, large majorities of employers and professors have been reporting profound dissatisfaction with the skills of recent public school graduates. They are especially critical of youngsters' command of grammar and spelling, their ability to write clearly and their capacity to do simple math. And professors and employers are not alone when it comes to these concerns. Just 1 high school teacher out of 5 says students in his or her own school typically learn "to speak and write well, with proper pronunciation and grammar."

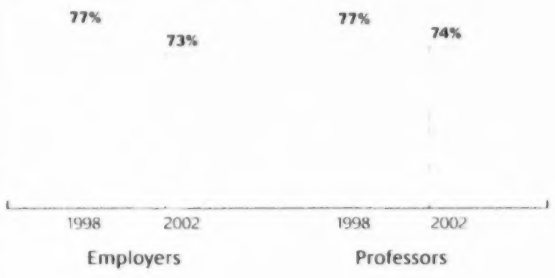
What's more, the dissatisfaction is not limited to academics. Most employers and professors see substantial room for improvement in graduates' work habits such as organization and punctuality and in their motivation and interest in learning new things. The one consistent bright spot for today's public school graduates: computer knowledge. Very large majorities of both employers and professors rate the computer skills of the young people they come in contact with as excellent or good.

Public Agenda research does reveal a significant gap between the concerns of employers and professors about student skills and the priorities in the nation's schools of education. While the vast majority of those who teach in schools of education think it is absolutely essential for prospective teachers to be "lifelong learners," a far smaller number says it is absolutely essential to produce teachers who "stress correct spelling, grammar and punctuation."

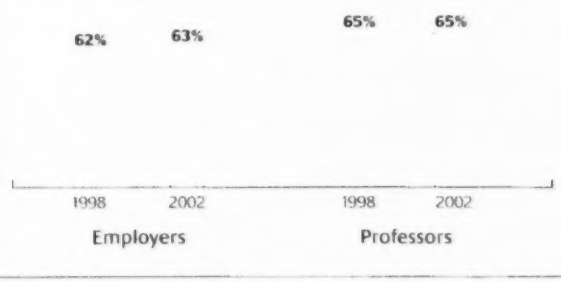
Profound Concern about Graduates' Basic Skills

Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to writing clearly

Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to grammar and spelling



Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" basic math skills



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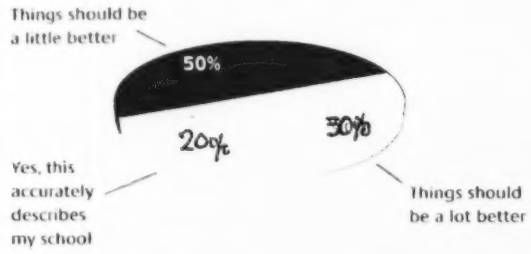
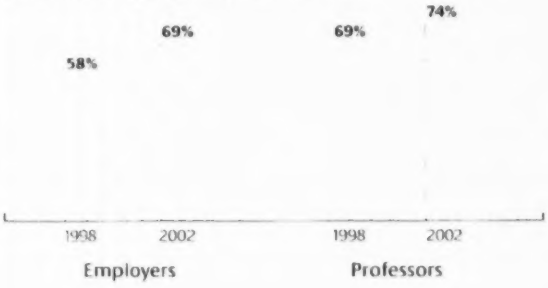
High School Teachers: Too Many Students Don't Speak or Write Well

Do students in your school learn to speak and write well, with proper pronunciation and grammar?

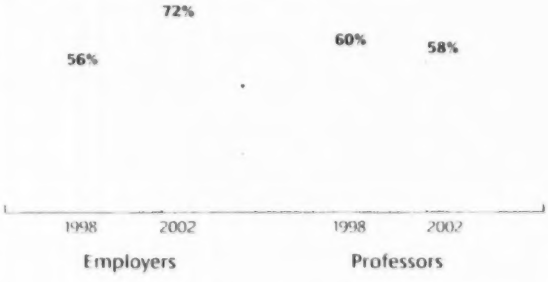


Will They Get to Work or Class on Time?

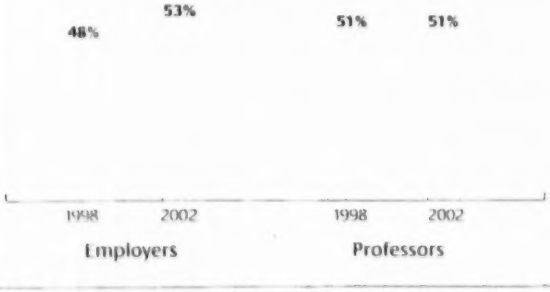
Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to being organized and on time



Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to being motivated and conscientious



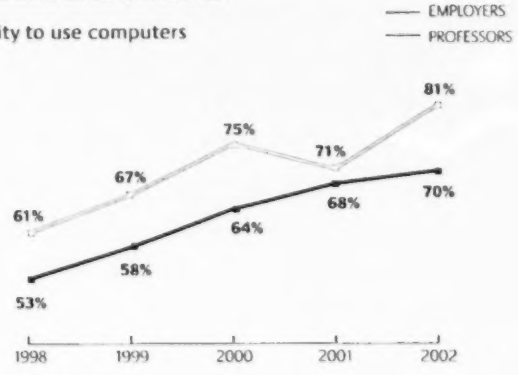
Public school graduates have "fair" or "poor" skills when it comes to being curious and interested in learning new things



Computer Skills Are the Bright Spot

% who say public school graduates have excellent or good skills when it comes to:

Ability to use computers



For Schools of Education, Stressing Grammar and Spelling Is Low Priority

% of professors of education who say it is "absolutely essential" to:

Encourage prospective teachers to be lifelong learners

Produce teachers who stress correct spelling, grammar and punctuation

FINDING NINE:

Teachers say lack of parental involvement is a serious problem. According to both teachers and parents, parental involvement should focus on what goes on at home rather than on school management issues.

Few teachers give parents good grades for participating in their child's education. A vast majority reports that it is always the same group of parents who come to help out, and only about 1 in 5 high school teachers describes parental involvement in their school as strong. Most teachers say more parental involvement would increase students' chances of success in school, yet an even larger majority points out that too many parents don't know what's going on with their child's education. Overwhelming majorities say they have serious problems with parents who refuse to hold kids accountable for their behavior or school work and who don't set limits or create structure at home.

The best way for parents to be involved, according to majorities of both teachers and parents, is to pay attention to what's going on at home. Checking homework and encouraging kids to care about school are far more important, they say, than volunteering in the school or getting involved with curriculum or personnel issues.

Neither group wants parents more heavily involved in day-to-day school decisions. Parents, for their part, would much rather chaperone a class trip than help design curriculum. They would also be far more comfortable helping with a career day than interviewing prospective teachers. In fact, few parents report that they have participated in any school management decisions.

One cautionary note: there is a strong belief—among parents, teachers and even school officials—that children whose parents are not involved in school get shortchanged. Most parents think kids with less active parents sometimes fall through the cracks, and many suspect these kids end up with the less-than-desirable teachers. And although most teachers believe that all children get equal treatment regardless of their parents' involvement, more than a third are of the impression that "active parents know how the system works, so their kids tend to get better treatment by the school." Among superintendents and school board members, overwhelming majorities report that their schools are most responsive to active, vocal parents.

Too Many Parents Are AWOL

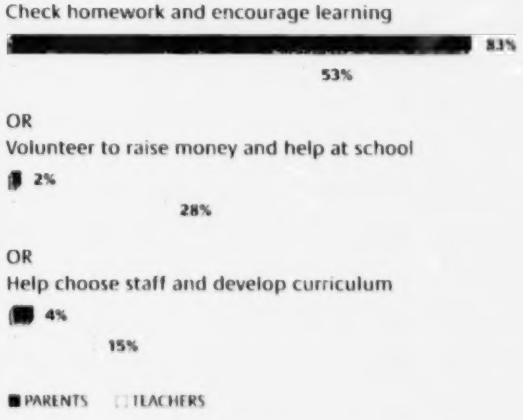
% of teachers who say:	
It's always the same group of parents who are helping out at school	98%
Too many parents don't know what's going on with their child's education	78%
More parental involvement would help my students be more successful in school*	65%
Parental involvement in my school is excellent or good	34%
Parental involvement is strong in my high school	19%

* The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher 2002

% of teachers who say they have a serious problem with:	
Parents who fail to set limits and create structure at home for their kids	83%
Parents who refuse to hold their kids accountable for their behavior or academic performance	81%

Take Care of Business at Home

The best way for parents to be involved with their child's education is to:



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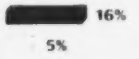
Let Educators Manage Schools

Which is the better approach?

To get parents directly involved in running the school, with input in hiring, budgeting and curriculum



OR

To get parents more involved in their children's education at home by such things as limiting TV and checking homework

■ PARENTS ☐ TEACHERS

What Parents Prefer

% of parents who say they would feel more comfortable:

Volunteering to chaperone class trips or parties	68%
VERSUS	
Helping to design curriculum	22%
Interviewing potential teachers or principals	26%
VERSUS	
Helping with career day or book sale	65%

What Parents Do

% of parents who have done the following in recent years:

Volunteered to chaperone class trip or party	57%
Helped school decide its policy on behavior and discipline	20%
Helped decide how to spend school's money	19%
Helped plan curriculum	15%
Served on committee to hire new teachers or principal	7%

Are Kids with Uninvolved Parents Shortchanged?

Kids whose parents are not involved at school sometimes get shortchanged and fall through the cracks

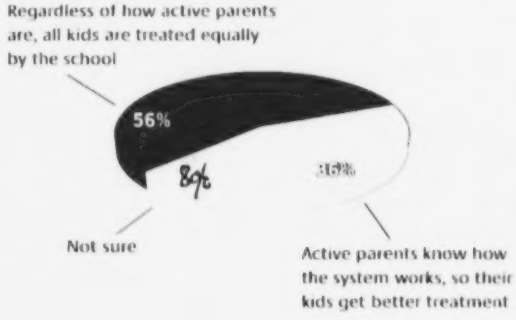
■ PARENTS ☐ TEACHERS

Schools are most responsive to active, vocal parents

■ SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS ☐ SUPERINTENDENTS

According to parents, children with active and involved parents:

According to teachers:


Regardless of how active parents are, all kids are treated equally by the school
56%
8%
Not sure
Active parents know how the system works, so their kids get better treatment

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FINDING TEN:

Teachers, parents and students continue to voice concern about the rough-edged, uncivil atmosphere in many high schools. Few see high schools as places of respect or civility.

Only a handful of Americans say that the kids they come across in public are respectful towards adults. And according to high school teachers, students and parents, disrespectful behavior among youngsters is commonplace in our nation's public schools as well.

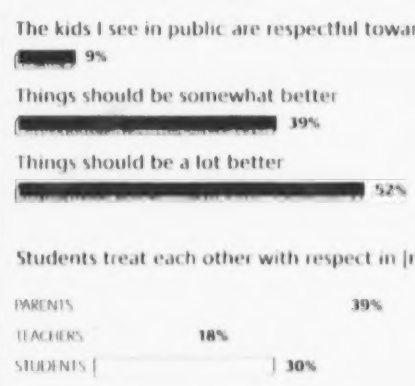
Large numbers of these groups think it's at least somewhat likely that a "serious violent incident—an act that causes severe physical harm" will occur in their high school in the near future. Perceptions among the general public also are pessimistic. In 2002, a Gallup poll found large majorities of Americans under the impression that student discipline, as well as fighting, violence and gangs, are serious problems in the schools in their community.

High school students themselves report that violence in school is a fact of life, with many saying that they have seen "serious fights" in their school at least monthly since they've been there. A majority also says their school has serious problems with too many students abusing alcohol or drugs. Most indicate that the hallways are crowded places where cursing is all too common. Many report a serious problem with bullying. Only about a third say students treat one another with respect, and even fewer say most students treat teachers respectfully. According to Public Agenda's annual *Reality Check* surveys, almost half of high school students say teachers spend more time trying to keep order in the classroom than teaching students—and many high school teachers agree.

Despite broad concern about these problems, they do not appear to be addressed much in teacher education programs. Only about a third of education professors say that their program places a lot of emphasis on teaching future teachers how to manage a rowdy classroom or that maintaining discipline and order is an absolutely essential skill to impart to prospective teachers. Most education professors believe that when a teacher faces a disruptive class, it probably means they have failed to make lessons engaging enough to the students. In the meantime, most principals report that too many of the new teachers they see fall short on classroom management and student discipline.

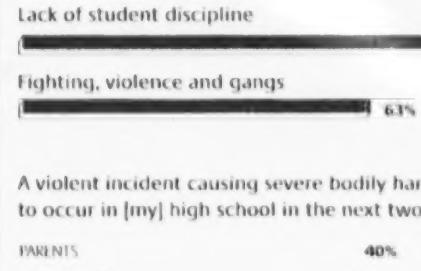
Falling Short on Respect

% of Americans who say:



Lack of Discipline, Violence Seen as Problems

% of Americans who say their local schools have serious problems with:*



* Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2002

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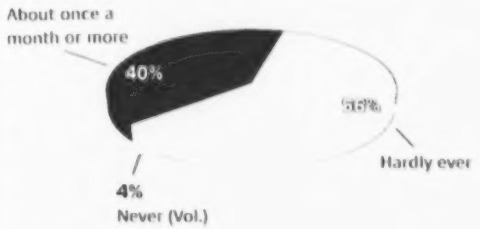
Fights Are Not Uncommon

According to high school students, serious fights in school occur:



Should Schools of Education Do More?

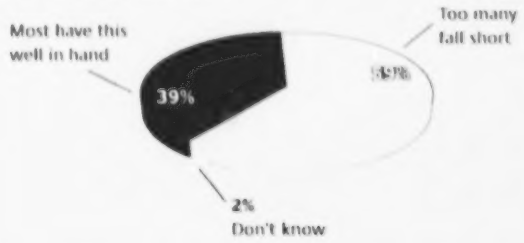
According to education professors:

A lot of emphasis is placed on teaching prospective teachers how to manage a rowdy classroom	30%
Maintaining discipline and order in the classroom is an absolutely essential skill to impart to prospective teachers	37%
When teachers face a disruptive class, it probably means they have failed to make lessons engaging enough	61%

Principals Say Too Many New Teachers Are Unprepared

How many new teachers have an ability to maintain discipline and order in the classroom?

% of principals who say:



Profanity, Drugs and Bullies

According to students, their high school has problems with:

Cursing in the hallways and cafeteria
77%

Hallways that are too crowded
64%

Too many students who abuse drugs or alcohol
62%

Too many students who bully and harass others
32%

Troubled Classrooms

% of high school students who say:

Teachers spend more time trying to keep order in the classroom than teaching	49%
In my high school, most students treat teachers with respect	19%

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FINDING ELEVEN:

Superintendents and principals say their biggest problems are politics and bureaucracy. Most want more autonomy over their own schools.

Undoubtedly, the standards movement has had an impact on the way district superintendents and school principals do their jobs. But according to them, it is the relentless frustration of dealing with politics and bureaucracy that makes their work especially tough, not the push for higher standards and accountability. Majorities indicate their time is taken up with paperwork and putting out fires, and relatively few say the system is set up to help them accomplish their goals.

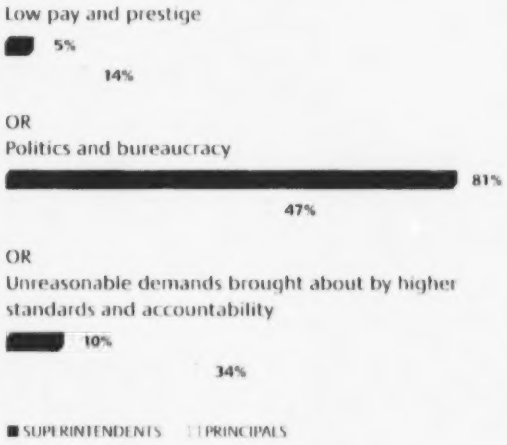
Given these concerns, superintendents and principals say they want more freedom and autonomy—especially when it comes to personnel decisions. Although most say they have enough freedom to hire teachers and other staff, relatively few say they have enough to reward outstanding teachers or to remove ineffective ones. According to approximately 9 out of 10 superintendents and principals, "giving administrators far more autonomy to run the schools while holding them accountable for getting results" would be an effective way to improve leadership in the public schools.

Student achievement may be the issue in the headlines, but superintendents and principals say their energy typically goes to other things. Overwhelming numbers complain that keeping up with government mandates takes up too much of their time and resources. For superintendents in particular, sizable numbers say too much of their attention goes to dealing with legal issues, union issues and complaining parents, and that meddlesome school boards are not uncommon. Large majorities of both groups also point out that dealing with harsh public criticism and political heat has become routine.

But despite the myriad of challenges they face, most superintendents and principals say they would choose the same line of work if they had the chance to do it all again.

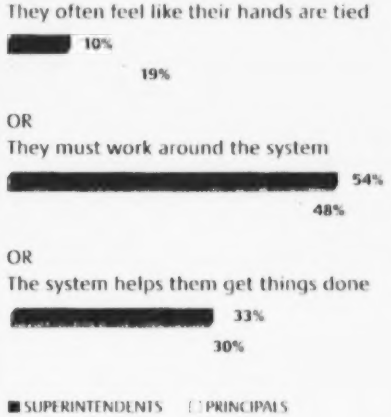
Politics and Bureaucracy Are the Greatest Frustrations

Why are talented leaders most likely to leave the field? Because they are frustrated by:



Having to Work around the System

When trying to get things done, superintendents and principals say:



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School Leaders Want More Autonomy

% who say they need *more* freedom and autonomy to:

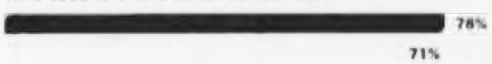
Reward outstanding teachers and staff

Remove ineffective teachers from the classroom

■ SUPERINTENDENTS □ PRINCIPALS

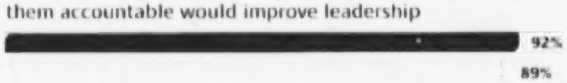
% who say they have *enough* freedom and autonomy to:

Hire teachers and other school staff



■ SUPERINTENDENTS □ PRINCIPALS

Giving administrators more autonomy while holding them accountable would improve leadership



■ SUPERINTENDENTS □ PRINCIPALS

Litigation and Complaints

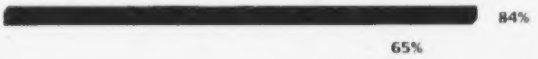
Superintendents say too much of their attention goes to:

Legal issues and litigation	50%
Parents with complaints or special interests	48%
Collective bargaining or other union issues	43%
Dealing with funding and budgeting	43%
District politics	37%

A Difficult Job...

The district has experienced an enormous increase in responsibilities and mandates without needed resources

Administrators are obligated to spend a disproportional amount of resources on special education



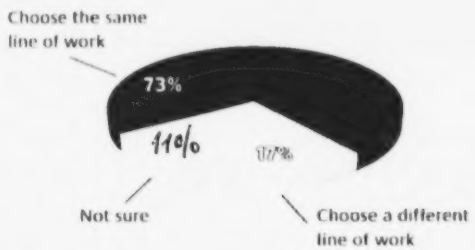
Managing harsh public criticism and political heat has become routine

The school board sometimes interferes in areas best left to the administrator's discretion

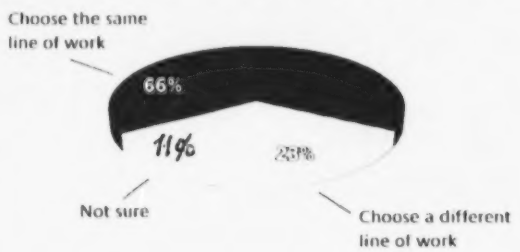
■ SUPERINTENDENTS □ PRINCIPALS

...But a Job to Love

Superintendents say if they were just starting out they would:



Principals say if they were just starting out they would:



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FINDING TWELVE:

Holding schools and educators directly accountable for student achievement is still uncommon. Teachers and principals have doubts about it, while parents and the public tend to support it.

The drive to raise student achievement nationwide has prompted a number of proposals that would hold schools, teachers and principals directly accountable for how much their students learn. Some are included in No Child Left Behind, but for the most part, this is an area of the movement where consequences have yet to be seen. And while many educators are intensely focused on this legislation, more than 4 in 10 members of the public admit that they never heard of it.

Few teachers report that their district ties teacher pay or evaluation to student achievement. Very few say principal tenure has been eliminated in favor of contracts based on specific goals. Hardly any say they know of schools that have been "reconstituted" because of persistently poor student academics.

Perhaps not surprisingly, relatively small numbers of teachers or principals think pay-for-performance and similar initiatives are a good idea. When Public Agenda asked new teachers what they thought would improve teacher quality, pay-for-performance was near the bottom of their list—although this group does voice support for paying more to teachers working in troubled schools.

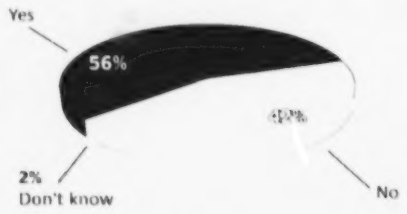
Among parents and the public, there is broader support for almost all these ideas, including most of the provisions of No Child Left Behind. Most Americans favor letting parents of youngsters in consistently low-performing schools switch their child to another school in the district. Majorities also favor removing teachers or principals whose students routinely fail to meet state standards. At the same time, there is a sharp negative reaction among the public to the idea of closing down failing schools. In fact, most people say failing schools should get additional tax dollars.

Although researchers have asked Americans about the provisions of No Child Left Behind and related accountability measures, it would be a mistake to accept opinion survey results as the public's final word. Very few Americans have any direct experience with how these measures would work in real-life schools and districts.

At this juncture, it is almost impossible to predict how communities will respond if a local school receives a failing grade or if one is penalized or perhaps even closed because of poor student test scores. Much may depend on local circumstances and how local leaders address the situation.

Have You Heard about the No Child Left Behind Act?

% of registered voters who say:



Public Education Network 2003

Judging Educators on Student Performance Is Fairly Unusual

% of teachers who say their district:

Ties financial incentives to student academic performance	24%
Evaluates teachers based on student statewide test scores	18%
Has overhauled persistently failing schools by replacing staff	10%
Has eliminated tenure for principals and replaced with contracts	10%

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Parents Approve, but Educators Are Doubtful

% who say it's "a good idea" to:

Tie financial incentives to student academic performance

22%

59%

Eliminate tenure for principals and replace with contracts

29%

63%

Overhaul persistently failing schools by replacing staff

23%

58%

■ TEACHERS □ PARENTS

Hold principals accountable for standardized test scores

34%

■ PRINCIPALS

Strong Support for Tutoring and Transfers

If a school doesn't show progress toward meeting standards, Americans would favor:

Offering tutoring by private providers	90%
Offering the choice to transfer to another school in the district	86%
Not renewing contracts of the principal or teachers	56%

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2002

But Closing Schools Strikes a Raw Nerve

If a school doesn't show progress toward meeting standards, Americans would favor:

Closing the school*	21%
Supporting tax increases to improve funding in the school**	52%
Obtaining more money from the local district*	77%

* Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll 2002

**Public Education Network 2003

For New Teachers, Other Measures Help More

% of new teachers who say this is a "very effective" way to improve teacher quality:

Reduce class size — 86%

Require high school teachers to major in their subject — 59%

Increase professional development — 57%

Increase teacher salaries — 52%

Require new teachers to spend more time under supervision in the classroom — 51%

Require graduate degree in education — 20%

Require teachers to pass subject-area tests — 16%

Eliminate teacher tenure — 12%

Tie teacher rewards or sanctions to student performance — 12%

Rely on alternative certification — 8%

Reduce requirements for teacher certification — 7%

Note: Teachers with 5 years or less experience

Pay More for Working in Tough Circumstances

% who say it's "a good idea" to pay higher salaries to teachers who:

Work in difficult schools with hard-to-educate children

84%

81%

Prove to be highly effective in improving academic performance

69%

77%

Teach subjects where there are severe teacher shortages, like math and science

44%

48%

■ NEW TEACHERS* □ PRINCIPALS

* Teachers with 5 years or less experience

Methodology

Where We Are Now draws upon findings from more than a dozen national public opinion studies conducted by Public Agenda and others over the past decade. Many topics about public education are covered, including student achievement, academic standards, standardized testing, accountability, curriculum, safety and discipline, parental involvement and the status of the teaching profession, among others. In addition, the findings culled for *Where We Are Now* capture the opinions and perceptions of virtually all of the stakeholders in public education today—parents, students, teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members, college professors, employers and taxpayers.

All surveys reported in *Where We Are Now* are based on nationally representative random samples of respondents. Sample size, interview length, method (e.g., mail vs. telephone survey) and field period vary depending on the research goals for each particular study. Full question wording and responses for each finding cited can be found online in the *Complete Survey Findings for Where We Are Now* at www.publicagenda.org.

Typically, Public Agenda's studies begin with in-depth interviews with experts with diverse points of view, as well as focus groups with members of the populations under investigation. The information gathered from the interviews and focus groups is used to craft questionnaires, which are rigorously pre-tested and then administered to nationally representative random samples of respondents.

Full copies of Public Agenda education reports since 1998 can be downloaded free of charge in PDF format from www.publicagenda.org. Print copies of all Public Agenda studies referred to in this report can be purchased by contacting Public Agenda directly (212-686-6610). Bulk purchases are available by arrangement.

What follows is a complete list of works cited in *Where We Are Now*, including both Public Agenda studies and those conducted by other research organizations.

Where We Are Now relies on survey findings from the following Public Agenda studies (in reverse chronological order):

A Lot Easier Said Than Done: Parents Talk about Raising Children in Today's America Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson and Ann Duffett with Leslie Wilson and Jackie Vine (Public Agenda, 2002). Sample: 1,607 parents of children between 5 and 17 years old. Funding provided by State Farm Insurance Companies with additional support from the Family Friendly Programming Forum of the Association of National Advertisers, Inc.

Aggravating Circumstances: A Status Report on Rudeness in America Farkas, Steve and Jean Johnson with Ann Duffett and Kathleen Collins (Public Agenda 2002). Sample: 2,013 adults. Funding provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools Johnson, Jean, Steve Farkas, Ann Duffett and Kathleen Collins (Public Agenda, 2002). Sample: 801 parents of public high school students; 920 public high school teachers; and 1,008 public high school students. Funding provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Reality Check Johnson, Jean, Steve Farkas and Ann Duffett (Public Agenda, 1998-2002). Sample: 2002: 600 K-12 public school teachers; 610 parents of K-12 public school students; 600 public school students in middle or high school; 251 employers who make hiring decisions for employees recently out of high school or college; and 252 college professors who taught freshmen or sophomores in the past two years. 2001: 601 teachers; 602 parents; 600 students; 251 employers; and 254 professors. 2000: 604 teachers; 615 parents; 605 students; 260 employers; and 251 professors. 1999: 700 teachers; 708 parents; 702 students; 252 employers; and 257 professors. 1998: 700 teachers; 700 parents; 700 students; 250 employers; and 250 professors. Funding provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts, with additional support from the GE Fund.

Just Waiting to Be Asked?: A Fresh Look at Attitudes on Public Engagement Farkas, Steve, Patrick Foley and Ann Duffett with Tony Foleno and Jean Johnson (Public Agenda, 2001). Sample: 686 superintendents; 475 school board members; 404 K-12 public school teachers; and 809 adults. Funding provided by the American Federation of Teachers, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, The George Gund Foundation, the National School Boards Association and the U.S. Department of Education.

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Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, Ann Duffett and Tony Foleno, with Patrick Foley (Public Agenda, 2001). Sample: 853 public school superintendents and 909 public school principals. Funding provided by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds.

A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson and Tony Foleno, with Ann Duffett and Patrick Foley (Public Agenda, 2000). Sample: 664 K-12 public school teachers with 5 years or less experience. Funding provided by The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the Open Society Institute.

Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American and Hispanic—View Higher Education Immerwahr, John with Tony Foleno (Public Agenda, 2000). Sample: 1,015 adults; 202 African American, 202 Hispanic and 201 white parents of children in high school. Funding provided by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, Consortium for Policy Research in Education and the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement.

Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson and Ann Duffett, with Claire Aulicino and Joanna McHugh (Public Agenda, 1999). Sample: 1,220 parents of K-12 public school students and 1,000 K-12 public school teachers. Funding provided by Kraft Foods.

Taking Responsibility: Leaders' Expectations of Higher Education Immerwahr, John (Public Agenda, 1999). Sample: 130 college professors; 163 college administrators and deans; 146 business leaders; and 162 government legislators and advisors. Funding provided by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education Immerwahr, John (Public Agenda, 1998). Sample: 700 adults. Funding provided by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

Time to Move On: African American and White Parents Set an Agenda for Public Schools Farkas, Steve and Jean Johnson, with Stephen Immerwahr and Joanna McHugh (Public Agenda, 1998). Sample: 800 White and 800 African American parents of children in grades K-12 in public or private school. Funding provided by W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Inc. and Rockefeller Foundation. This study was conducted as part of a joint project of Public Agenda and the Public Education Network.

Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education Farkas, Steve and Jean Johnson with Ann Duffett (Public Agenda, 1997). Sample: 900 college professors of education. Funding provided by The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

Assignment Incomplete: The Unfinished Business of Education Reform Johnson, Jean with Steve Farkas, Will Friedman, John Immerwahr and Ali Bers (Public Agenda, 1995). Sample: 1,200 adults, including oversamples of 200 parents of public school students and 200 public school teachers. Funding provided by Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Proctor & Gamble Fund, TRW Inc. and The George Gund Foundation.

First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools Johnson, Jean and John Immerwahr (Public Agenda, 1994). Sample: 869 members of the general public, 320 White parents, 200 African American parents and 204 traditional Christian parents. Funding provided by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Ashland Oil Foundation, BellSouth Foundation, The Business Roundtable, Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Danforth Foundation, General Mills Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and The Rockefeller Foundation.

In addition, Public Agenda relied on many valuable survey findings from the following highly respected public opinion studies on public education:

Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Economic Times: What Voters Want from Elected Leaders (2003). Public Education Network (P.E.N.). Sample: 1,050 registered voters. www.publiceducation.org

The MetLife Survey of The American Teacher 2002 by Dana Markow, Ph.D. and Marc Scheer, Ph.D., of Harris Interactive, Inc. Sample: 2,308 public school students in grades 7-12 and 1,111 public school teachers in grades 7-12. www.metlife.com

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (1998-2002) by Lowell C. Rose and Alec M. Gallup. Sample: 2002: 1,000 adults. 2001: 1,108 adults. 2000: 1,093 adults. 1999: 1,103 adults. 1998: 1,151 adults. www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kappan.htm

NPR/Kaiser Family Foundation/Kennedy School Education Survey (June 1999). Sample: 1,422 adults. www.npr.org/programs/specials/poll/education/education.front.html

School Reform Survey (October 1991). *Agenda Magazine*/Louis Harris & Associates. Sample: 1,252 adults. www2.irss.unc.edu/data_archive/catsearch.html

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